

**Mayor's column for  
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Did you know that when you disconnect from Comcast television/internet services that you have to return the equipment to one of their authorized dealers? Or they will charge you for it? (I suppose if I read the fine print that Verizon has the same requirement.) Going back to my "cancellation" phone call to the Comcast customer service center, the call taker told me I had my choice of places to return the equipment: Everett or Seattle! Presumably, I guess, because no one lives in between those two fine cities!

I chose Everett and made the trek up there on a Saturday morning to hand over my Comcast DVR box, my internet cable modem, and my remote. This was an "authorized drop off location" and not a Comcast office. I walked in the door and was given very explicit directions by the counter person about where to fill out the form and where NOT to leave my equipment while I filled out the form! Not realizing that I would have to fill out a form that included serial numbers on it, I didn't bring my reading glasses. The clerk was quick with her non-offer to help me with her young eyes. So I squinted my way through it and came back to her "area" with the form and the equipment. I was told that I was supposed to have left the equipment where I came from and only bring back the form. Sorry! She approved the form and told me that since I didn't know my account number, it would take longer for the transaction to be completed. I was free to go... and I did! Quickly!

I received follow-up emails and phone calls from Verizon checking on how the installation went. While I appreciate their eagerness to please, I still hate their automated customer service. But then, Comcast has that as well. So apparently does the rest of the free world!

Comcast also followed up with a letter asking me to return their equipment, after I had already done so. I think they give you an extra 24 hours or so to actually shut off your service because of calls that they may get from customers who misjudged the time for a Verizon install. Comcast also has been sending out mailers about their new bundle package, similar in price to their competitor. They are also upgrading to all-digital channels, which should free up space to allow additional programming and further improvements in service. The battle for customers is definitely on!

Since the installation, I have had no problems or concerns with the new FIOS service. I am very happy with it other than the learning curve for new "stuff"! The product is everything that Verizon claims it is. I have yet to receive my initial bill, so that remains a mystery. I suspect that I will spend some time with the automated customer service girl in the near future.

In conclusion of this four-part "mini-series," I must say that I have been surprised by the feedback from readers of my adventure. I have received phone calls and emails, and been stopped in restaurants and on the street by folks who wanted to know "what was next." It would appear at face value that many Edmonds residents are following along because they are considering the "switch" as well. Whether it's the novelty of a new system, a cost savings, or dissatisfaction with the current provider, people are interested. If you're thinking of switching

solely on the cost factor, I would recommend a call to Comcast, Dish Network, or other providers before you call Verizon, just to see if they will make you a “deal.” It’s worth the phone call no matter how long you have to wait for a real person to answer!

And should you decide to try Verizon, don’t settle for what they offer—ask for more! The consumer should be the ultimate winner in this battle of giants.

Thanks again for showing such interest in the topic. I appreciate all the feedback and questions. Now, can I interest you in a City budget discussion?